

Agriculture Water Use

Presentation to the
Legislative Study Commission on
Water and Wastewater Infrastructure
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2009

The Year of the Water Bills

- Bills to move funding and operation of existing water and wastewater programs to a new state level authority
- Bill to take away private rights and require permits (WAS recommendation)
- Bill to protect rights of private well owners
- Bill to provide a tax credit for purchasing water efficient products
- Bill to provide tax credits for the installation of cisterns and innovative irrigation systems
- Bill to establish new water quantity cost share program for landowners and farmers
- **Bill to create a Legislative Study Commission to study issues related to water, water supply and delivery, wastewater infrastructure as well as funding**

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Overview

- Understanding agriculture water use
- Recognizing our capacity for storing water
- Reviewing agriculture's commitment to water resources

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Agriculture Water Use

Amount – Perception

- 60%, 45%. 30%???
- USGS
- National, Midwest patterns

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Amount – Review of Data

- How do we know?
 - Statewide registration
 - CCPCUA
 - Southern Coastal Plain
 - USDA Agriculture Census
 - Agriculture water use surveys

Amount – Current & Extensive Data

- The results
 - $<1\%$ withdrawals
 - $\leq 10\%$ consumptive use

Amount – Review of Practices

■ Efficiencies

- Animal agriculture has undergone significant advancements
- Little irrigated corn and grain acreage in NC
- Green industry extremely efficient in irrigation methods

Amount – Review of Need

- Importance
 - State's No. 1 industry
 - Agriculture feels effects first
 - Green industry is essential
 - > \$8.6 billion/year to ag economy
 - > 150,000 employees

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Storage Capacity

- Approximately 17,000 farm ponds in NC
- Water control structures, drainage ditches
- 3 million private wells

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Commitment

- Central Coastal Plain CUA (missed opportunity?)
- 2002 drought (HB 1215, drought rule)
- 2007-2009 drought (HB 2499)
- 2009 legislation
- Present day

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Commitment

- Voluntary BMP's
- Education and outreach
- Conservation and efficiency
- Increased storage capacity
- Use of alternative sources
- Use of wastewater
- New cost share program

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Commitment

■ Development of strategic plan

- Includes previous ideas for voluntary BMP's
- Projections for growth
- Water resources "areas of concern"
- Less water dependent crops
- Capacity for storing water using farm ponds
- Opportunities to partner with municipal wastewater plants
- Water audits
- Need for cost share
- Credibility and utility

Existing Tools

- Water Use Act
- CUA
- Statewide reporting
- Inter-basin transfers
- HB 1215 (and water conservation rule)
- HB 2499
- Executive orders

Summary

- We do know a lot about agriculture water use
- Agriculture can play lead role in increasing capacity
- Agriculture remains committed to protecting our resources
- NC has several tools to protect water
- Let's not miss this opportunity
- We need to act now